

WE DON'T STEAL BABIES

A kit for book clubs

For the novel by Maisie MacDonald

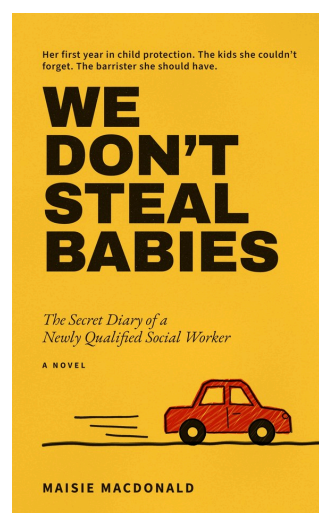
BEFORE YOU CHOOSE IT

What kind of book is it? A novel in diary form. It is funny for a long stretch, and then it asks more of you.

How long is it? 352 pages. The entries are short, so it reads faster than it looks.

Will it upset anybody? It might. It is about child protection, so it includes neglect, domestic abuse, the sexual abuse of a teenager, and grief. None of it is graphic. If somebody in your group has had children's services in their life, or grew up in care, it is kind to mention the subject before you vote.

Does anybody need to know about social work? No. There is a glossary at the front.



ON THE NIGHT

- **To start.** Go round the room. Everybody gives their own day in numbers, as Maisie does. Cups of tea. Emails. Times they said “I’ll ring you back”.
- **To eat.** Biscuits, at least two kinds. There is a hierarchy. Somebody will have views.
- **To read aloud.** The opening of the entry for Tuesday 15th September, on page 25, where Maisie reads Billy’s file and then meets him.
- **To finish.** Seven questions at secretsocialworker.com/quiz will tell each of you which member of the team you are.

THE QUESTIONS

These give away the whole story. Finish the book first.

1. The title answers a question before anybody has asked it. By the end of the book, is the answer still as simple as “We don’t”? What would Jade say?
2. Maisie tells her year three ways: a private diary, a public blog and the official case file. Where did you notice the widest gap between what the file recorded and what happened in the room?
3. “I never met your threshold. Riley met it in one night.” What is Jade accusing the system of? Is she right?
4. Did Mrs Khan know? Does it change anything if she didn’t?
5. Hana draws a door for months before she says a word about what happened behind it. Why do you think the door closes again in March, after so much progress?
6. Billy hands over his toy car “so it doesn’t leave”, and months later asks for it back. What has changed for him between those two moments?
7. Leon has a history of violence, and he turns up to every contact session. Did your view of him shift as the year went on? What would he have to do before you trusted him?
8. Maisie’s father tells her she behaves as though love has to be earned. How does that belief shape her choices with Jamie, with Ben and at work?
9. Maisie writes about real children on an anonymous blog, and talks about a live case to the man she is sleeping with. How do you judge her? Does the book let her off too lightly?
10. Nobody comes for Jamie. Why do you think the story leaves him unpunished?
11. The last line is “Here we go again.” Is that a hopeful ending or a bleak one?
12. Has the book changed what you think social workers do all day?

If the book has raised something for anybody in your group, there is a list of people who can help at secretsocialworker.com/help. This kit is free to copy. I would love to know what your group made of it: maisie@secretsocialworker.com